CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of searching intellectual property listings, comprising:

   a) maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users;

   b) establishing a connection to a plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

   c) receiving from at least one of said plurality of users search criteria for searching said plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

   d) searching said plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings according to said search criteria;

   e) presenting a resulting set of intellectual property listings to said at least one of said plurality of users; and

   f) receiving from said at least one of said plurality of users an identification of those of said resulting set of intellectual property listings that are of interest to said at least one of said plurality of users.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

   securing permission from each of said plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings for allowing a search of each said plurality of third-party sources.

3. The method of Claim 2, further comprising the step of:

   securing from each of said plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings a fee-sharing agreement.

4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

   establishing contact between said at least one of said plurality of users and those of said plurality of third-party sources including those of said resulting set of intellectual property listings which are of interest to said at least one of said plurality of users.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the step of establishing contact includes the steps of :

   a) hyperlinking said user with said those of said plurality of third-party sources; and

   b) transmitting to said those of said plurality of third-party sources a unique identifier for identifying said user-interface site as the source of a contemplated intellectual property transaction.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

   providing said at least one of said plurality of users with a transaction manager to facilitate a contemplated intellectual property transaction.

7. The method of Claim 6, further comprising the step of:

   having said transaction manager contact those of said plurality of third-party sources including those of said resulting set of intellectual property

listings which are of interest to said at least one of said plurality of users

to facilitate said contemplated intellectual property transaction.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of searching said plurality of third-party sources includes the steps of:

a) designating a buffer memory for temporary storage of intellectual property listings matching said search criteria;

b) reformatting said search criteria according to requirements of each of said plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

c) searching through the intellectual property listings of said each of said plurality of third-party sources for matches with said respective reformatted search criteria; and

d) collecting such intellectual property listings that match said reformatted criteria and storing said listings in said buffer memory.

9. The method of Claim 8, further comprising the step of:

reformatting said intellectual property listings stored in said buffer memory in a predetermined format prior to presentation thereof to said at least one of said plurality of users.

10. The method of Claim 8, further comprising the step of:

reordering said intellectual property listings stored in said buffer memory according to predefined criteria prior to presentation thereof to said at least one of said plurality of users.

11. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

> making available to said at least one of said plurality of users
>
> analytical tools for valuation and analysis of the intellectual property.

12. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

> making available to said user escrow services related to a
>
> contemplated intellectual property transaction.

13. The method of Claim 1, further comprising step of:

> making available to said user title insurance covering the intellectual
>
> property which is the subject of a contemplated intellectual property
>
> transaction.

14. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step:

> making available to said user patent validity insurance covering the
>
> intellectual property which is the subject of a contemplated intellectual
>
> property transaction.

15. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

> making available to said user consulting services related to a
>
> contemplated intellectual property transaction.

16. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

> making available to said user legal services related to a contemplated
>
> intellectual property transaction.

17. The method of Claim 1, wherein step of searching said plurality of third-party sources includes the steps of:

a) designating first and second memory storage areas for storage of intellectual property listings;

b) taking a snapshot of each of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

c) storing said snapshots in said first memory storage area;

d) reformatting each of said snapshots in a predetermined format;

e) storing said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area;

f) taking a new snapshot of one of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

g) comparing said new snapshot with said snapshot of the same third-party source in said first memory storage area and identifying any changes;

h) reformatting said changes in said predetermined format;

i) updating the corresponding said reformatted snapshot in said second memory storage area with said reformatted changes;

j) replacing said snapshot in said first memory storage area with said corresponding new snapshot; and

k) repeating steps 2) through 10) for each of said plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings.

18. The method of Claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

a) designating a buffer memory for temporary storage of intellectual property listings matching said search criteria;

b) searching through said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area for matches with said search criteria; and

c) collecting such intellectual property listings that match said criteria and storing said listings in said buffer memory.

19. The method of Claim 1, wherein said third-party sources are Internet auction sites.

20. The method of Claim 1, wherein said user-interface site is a website.

21. A method of searching intellectual property listings online, comprising the steps of:

a) maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users;

b) maintaining access to a predetermined set of third-party sources of intellectual property listings searchable online;

c) eliciting from each user search criteria for searching each of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

d) designating first and second memory storage areas for storage of intellectual property listings;

e) taking a snapshot of each of said third-party sources of intellectual

property listings;

f) storing said snapshots in said first memory storage area;

g) reformatting each of said snapshots in a predetermined format; and

h) storing said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area.

22. The method of Claim 21, further comprising the steps of:

i) taking a new snapshot of one of said third-party sources of intellectual

property listings;

j) comparing said new snapshot with said snapshot of the same third-

party source in said first memory storage area and identifying any

changes;

k) reformatting said changes in said predetermined format;

l) updating the corresponding said reformatted snapshot in said second

memory storage area with said reformatted changes;

m) replacing said snapshot in said first memory storage area with said

corresponding new snapshot;

n) repeating steps e) through m) for each of said predetermined set of

third-party sources of intellectual property listings; and

o) repeating at least once steps e) through n).

23. The method of Claim 22, further comprising the steps of:

p) presenting a resulting set of intellectual property listings to said user; and

q) eliciting from said user an identification of those intellectual property listings which are of interest.

24. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

r) securing permission from each of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings allowing search of said third-party sources and presenting listings therefrom to said user.

25. The method of Claim 24, further comprising securing the step of:

s) from each of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings a fee-sharing agreement in respect of any fees paid as a result of transactions arising out of contacts initially made through said user-interface site.

26. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

r) establishing contact between said user and the third party maintaining said intellectual property listings which are of interest.

27. The method of Claim 26, wherein said establishing contact comprises the steps of:

1) hyperlinking said user with said third party maintaining said intellectual property listings which are of interest; and

2) transmitting to said third party a unique identifier, identifying said

user-interface site as the source of a contemplated intellectual property

transaction.

28. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

r) providing said user with a transaction manager to facilitate a

contemplated intellectual property transaction.

29. The method of Claim 28, further comprising the step of:

s) said transaction manager contacting said third party maintaining the

listings of the intellectual property being of interest to said user to

facilitate said transaction.

30. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

r) designating a buffer memory for temporary storage of intellectual

property listings matching said search criteria elicited from said user;

s) searching through said reformatted snapshots in said second memory

storage area for matches with said search criteria; and

t) collecting such intellectual property listings that match said criteria

and storing said listings in said buffer memory.

31. The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:

u) reformatting said intellectual property listings stored in said buffer

memory in a predetermined format prior to presentation thereof to said

user.

32. The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of reordering said intellectual property listings stored in said buffer memory according to predefined criteria prior to presentation thereof to said user.

33. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of making available to said user analytical tools for valuation and analysis of the intellectual property, wherein said analytical tools are not available from the third party maintaining said intellectual property listings which are of interest.

34. The method of Claim 23, further comprising making available to said user escrow services related to a contemplated intellectual property transaction, wherein said services are not available from the third party maintaining said listings of said intellectual property which are of interest.

35. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of making available to said user title insurance covering the intellectual property which is the subject of a contemplated intellectual property transaction, wherein said title insurance is not available from the third party maintaining intellectual property listings which are of interest.

36. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of making available to said user patent validity insurance covering the intellectual property which is the subject of a contemplated intellectual property transaction, wherein said patent validity insurance is not available from the third party maintaining said intellectual property listings which are of interest.

37. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of making available to said user consulting services related to a contemplated intellectual property transaction.

38. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of making available to said user legal services related to a contemplated intellectual property transaction.

39. A method of searching listings of goods or services, comprising:

   a) maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users;

   b) establishing a connection to a plurality of third-party sources of said goods or services;

   c) receiving from at least one of said plurality of user search criteria for searching said plurality of third-party sources;

   d) searching said plurality of third-party sources according to said search criteria;

   e) presenting a resulting set of goods or services listings to said at least one of said plurality of user; and

   f) receiving from said at least one of said plurality of users an identification of those of said resulting set of goods or services listings that are of interest to said at least one of said plurality of users.

40. The method of Claim 39, wherein said goods comprise businesses available for sale, merger or acquisition.

41. The method of Claim 39, wherein said goods comprise venture capital available for investment.

42. The method of Claim 39, further comprising providing a transaction manager to facilitate a contemplated transaction between said user and the provider of said goods or services.

43. The method of Claim 39, wherein said third-party listings are comprised by Internet auction sites.

44. The method of Claim 39, wherein said user-interface site is a website.

45. A system for searching for a desired one of many items offered on the Internet, where said items are presented on third-party user-interface sites in multiple lists, said lists being in differing formats, comprising:

    a)   means for hosting a user-interface site;

    b)   means for eliciting at least one identifying characteristic of the desired item from a user;

    c)   means for reformatting said identifying characteristic of the desired item elicited from said user in accordance with the requirements of each of said third-party user-interface sites;

    d)   means for searching each of said multiple lists to identify each item listed therein possessing said at least one identifying characteristic and compiling a list thereof;

e) means for reformatting at least one of said lists of items possessing

said at least one identifying characteristic into a predetermined format;

and

f) means for presenting said reformatted list to said user for further

selection of the desired item.

46. The system as in Claim 45, wherein said means for hosting is a computer

server.

47. The system as in Claim 45, wherein said hosted user-interface site is a website

and said third-party user-interface sites comprise Internet auction sites.

48. A system for searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

a) means for maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of

users;

b) means for maintaining access to a predetermined set of third-party

sources of intellectual property listings searchable online;

c) means for eliciting from each user search criteria for searching each of

said third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

d) means for searching said predetermined set of third-party sources of

intellectual property listings in accord with said search criteria elicited

from said user;

e) means for presenting a resulting set of intellectual property listings to

said user; and

f) means for eliciting from said user an identification of those listings of said set of intellectual property listings which are of interest.

49. A system for searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

a) means for maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users;

b) means for maintaining access to a predetermined set of third-party sources of intellectual property listings searchable online;

c) means for eliciting from each user search criteria for searching each of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

d) means for designating first and second memory storage areas for storage of intellectual property listings;

e) means for taking a snapshot of each of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings;

f) means for storing said snapshots in said first memory storage area;

g) means for reformatting each of said snapshots in a predetermined format; and

h) means for storing said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area.

50. A method of searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

a) maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users;

b) designating first and second memory storage areas for storage of intellectual property listings;

c) taking a snapshot of each of a plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings searchable online;

d) storing said snapshots in said first memory storage area;

e) reformatting each of said snapshots in a predetermined format; and

f) storing said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area.

51. A system for searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

a) means for maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users;

b) means for designating first and second memory storage areas for storage of intellectual property listings;

c) means for taking a snapshot of each of a plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings searchable online;

d) means for storing said snapshots in said first memory storage area;

e) means for reformatting each of said snapshots in a predetermined format; and

f) means for storing said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area.

52. A method of searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

    a) designating first and second memory storage areas for storage of intellectual property listings;

    b) taking a snapshot of each of a plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings searchable online;

    c) storing said snapshots in said first memory storage area;

    d) reformatting each of said snapshots in a predetermined format; and

    e) storing said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area.

53. A system for searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

    a) means for designating first and second memory storage areas for storage of intellectual property listings;

    b) means for taking a snapshot of each of a plurality of third-party sources of intellectual property listings searchable online;

    c) means for storing said snapshots in said first memory storage area;

    d) means for reformatting each of said snapshots in a predetermined format; and

    e) means for storing said reformatted snapshots in said second memory storage area.

54. A method of evaluating and comparing a plurality of online auctions and exchanges, comprising:

    a) maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users;

    b)   soliciting relevant information from a plurality of third-party online

        auctions and exchanges;

    c)   formating said relevant information related to said plurality of third-

        party online auctions and exchanges in a format conducive to the

        comparison of said third-party online auctions and exchanges by a

        user; and

    d)   displaying on said user-interface site said relevant information related

        to said plurality of third-party online auctions and exchanges in said

        format.

55. The method of Claim 54, wherein said relevant information comprises a

    number of listings on each of said plurality of third-party online auctions and

    exchanges.

56. The method of Claim 54, wherein said relevant information comprises a

    number of hits per fixed time period on each of said plurality of third-party

    online auctions and exchanges.

57. A method of submitting a listing of goods and services, comprising:

    a)   soliciting from a user an indication of at least one third-party online

        auction or exchange; and

    b)   soliciting from said user a listing of goods or services desired by said

        user to be submitted to said third-party online auction or exchange.

58. The method of Claim 57, further comprising submitting said listing of goods

or services to said third-party online auction or exchange for listing thereon in

the name of a provider of a user-interface site.

59. The method of Claim 57, further comprising:

    c)   soliciting information from said user required by said third-party

        online auction or exchange for registration therewith;

    d)   registering said user with said third-party online auction or exchange;

    e)   logging said user onto said third-party online auction or exchange; and

    f)   submitting said listing of goods or services to said third-party online

        auction or exchange for listing thereon in the name of said user.

60. The method of Claim 57, further comprising sharing a commission on a

transaction related to said listing of said goods or services with said third-

party online auction or exchange.

61. The method of Claim 57, further comprising charging a commission to said

user for a transaction related to said listing of said goods or services.

62. A system for submitting listings to online auctions and exchanges,

comprising:

    a)   means for maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of

        users;

    b)   means for soliciting relevant information from a plurality of third-

        party online auctions and exchanges; and

c) means for displaying on said user-interface site said relevant information related to said plurality of third-party online auctions and exchanges.

63. The system of Claim 62, further comprising:

d) means for presenting said relevant information related to said plurality of third-party online auctions and exchanges in a format conducive to the comparison of said third-party online auctions and exchanges by a user;

e) means for soliciting from said user an indication of a selected subset of said plurality of third-party online auctions or exchanges; and

f) means for soliciting from said user a listing of goods or services desired by said user to be submitted to said subset of third-party online auctions and exchanges.

64. The system of Claim 63, further comprising means for submitting said listing of goods or services to said subset of third-party online auctions and exchanges for listing thereon in the name of a provider of said user-interface site.

65. The system of Claim 63, further comprising:

g) means for soliciting information from said user required by each of said third-party online auctions and exchanges for registration therewith;

h) means for registering said user with each of said third-party online auctions and exchanges;

i) means for logging said user onto each of said third-party online auctions and exchanges; and

j) means for submitting said listing of goods or services to said subset of third-party online auctions and exchanges for listing thereon in the name of said user.

66. A method of searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

a) making available to a user a software application for installment on said user's computing device, said application comprising instructions to:

    i. execute a query as specified by said user;

    ii. search predetermined Internet sites and exchanges;

    iii. display search results to said user via said terminal, said search results comprising one or more intellectual property listings; and

    iv. enabling said user to indicate a listing of interest; and

b) assigning a transaction manager to contact said user and the source of said listing to facilitate a desired transaction related to said listing of interest.

67. The method of Claim 66, further comprising maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users for downloading said software application into said user's computing device.

68. The method of Claim 66, further comprising prompting said user for personal information, said information used by said software application to automatically register said user with a plurality of Internet auctions and exchanges.

69. The method of Claim 68, wherein said personal information comprises one or more of the user's name, the user's password, the name of a company, an address, a phone number, and an e-mail address.

70. A system for searching intellectual property listings online, comprising:

   a) means for maintaining a user-interface site accessible by a plurality of users; and

   b) means for downloading a software application to a user's network terminal, said application comprising instructions to:

      i. execute a query as specified by said user;

      ii. search predetermined Internet sites and exchanges via said user-interface site;

      iii. display search results to said user via said terminal, said search results comprising one or more intellectual property listings; and

      iv. enabling said user to indicate a listing of interest; and

   c) means for assigning a transaction manager to contact said user and the source of said listing to facilitate a desired transaction related to said listing of interest.

71. The system of Claim 70, further comprising prompting said user for personal information, said information used by said software application to automatically register said user with a plurality of Internet auctions and exchanges.

72. The method of Claim 71, wherein said personal information comprises one or more of the user's name, the user's password, the name of a company, an address, a phone number, and an e-mail address.

73. A method of building an intellectual property database for storing the results of searching a plurality of third-party sources, comprising:

   a) designating a buffer memory for temporary storage of intellectual property listings matching search criteria elicited from a user;

   b) reformatting as necessary said search criteria elicited from said user in accord with individual requirements of a specific third-party source of intellectual property listings;

   c) searching through the listings of said third-party source for matches with said reformatted search criteria;

   d) collecting such intellectual property listings that match said reformatted criteria and storing said listings in said buffer memory;

   e) determining whether any of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings of said set remain unsearched; and

   f) performing steps b) through e) until all of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings of said set have been searched.

74. A system for building an intellectual property database for storing the results of searching a plurality of third-party sources, comprising:

    a) means for designating a buffer memory for temporary storage of intellectual property listings matching search criteria elicited from a user;

    b) means for reformatting as necessary said search criteria elicited from said user in accord with individual requirements of a specific third-party source of intellectual property listings;

    c) means for searching through the listings of said third-party source for matches with said reformatted search criteria;

    d) means for collecting such intellectual property listings that match said reformatted criteria and storing said listings in said buffer memory; and

    e) means for determining whether any of said third-party sources of intellectual property listings of said set remain unsearched.

75. A method for purchasing an item offered for sale by at least one of a plurality of entities, comprising the steps of:

    a) receiving a search request for said item from a user;

    b) locating said item in at least one of said plurality of entities;

    c) receiving a bid to purchase said item from said user; and

    d) forwarding said bid to said at least one of said plurality of entities.

76. The method of claim 75, wherein said item is intellectual property.

77. The method of claim 75, wherein said plurality of entities are selected from the group of exchanges and auctions.

78. The method of claim 75, further comprising the steps of:

    a) monitoring said at least one of said plurality of entities for an outbid status; and

    b) forwarding said outbid status to said user.

79. The method of claim 75, further comprising the steps of:

    a) monitoring said at least one of said plurality of entities for a winning bid; and

    b) reporting said winning bid to said user.

80. A method for purchasing an item offered for sale by a plurality of entities, comprising the steps of:

    e) receiving a search request for said item from a user;

    f) searching said plurality of entities;

    g) locating said item in a subset of said plurality of entities;

    h) receiving a bid to purchase said item from said user;

    i) comparing fees and commissions charged to said user by said subset of said plurality of entities;

j)   selecting one of said subset of said plurality of entities, which charges

the least amount of fees and commission; and

k)   forwarding said bid to said one of said subset of said plurality of

entities, which charges the least amount of fees and commission.

81. A method for placing an item for sale on a plurality of entities, comprising the

steps of:

a)   receiving a listing for said item;

b)   forwarding said listing to said plurality of entities; and

c)   monitoring said plurality of entities for a highest bidder.

82. The method of claim 81, further comprising the step of:

deleting said listing from those of said plurality of entities not having said

highest bidder.

83. The method of claim 81, further comprising the step of:

posting said highest bidder on said of plurality of entities not receiving

said highest bidder.

84. The method of claim 81, wherein said item is intellectual property.

85. The method of claim 81, wherein said plurality of entities are selected from

the group of exchanges and auctions.

86. The method of claim 39, wherein said goods or services are offered.

87. The method of claim 39, wherein said goods or services are wanted.